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Entering Nonstandard Characters

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By Neil J. Rubenking

I have been trying to figure out how to access the ASCII chart in Windows. How do I use the symbols on the ASCII chart that do not exist on the keyboard—not just in Outlook or Word, but in everyday computing?

Matthew Gelfman

You can use the Character Map applet to identify the desired characters and optionally copy them to the Clipboard. Character Map is typically found in the Start menu. Go to Programs | Accessories or Programs | Accessories | System Tools. Double-clicking on a character moves it into a box labeled Characters to copy, and clicking the Copy button duplicates the selected characters to the Clipboard. If you need to enter a word with several accented characters, you can type the entire word in the Characters to copy box, double-clicking the special characters as you reach them (see [Figure 2](#)).

When you select a character, the bottom right-hand corner of the Character Map displays a hint like Keystroke: Alt-0246. In most applications, you can enter the character directly using that information. Hold down the Alt key, tap out the numbers on the numeric keypad (not the top row numbers) and then release the Alt key. The initial 0 is important—Alt-0246 correctly yields the ö character, while Alt-246 gives you a division symbol (÷). You must activate Num Lock before using this technique in certain programs, including Internet Explorer and Microsoft Office programs. Otherwise some of the key combinations produce unwanted actions. For example, if you press the keypad 4 with Alt held down, Internet Explorer will interpret it as Alt-Left Arrow, the shortcut for the Back button.

Microsoft Word has its own built-in ability to insert special characters via the Insert | Symbol menu choice. In addition, you can insert characters with accents or other diacritical marks using Word's dead keys. For example, to insert an è, press Ctrl-' followed by the letter e; to insert the character ñ, press Ctrl-Shift-~ followed by the letter n. For a complete list, search the Help Answer Wizard using the keywords shortcut international.

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U+0050
Greek C $\pi = p$
Greek S.